Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

storing data indicative of membership at a first client;

at a system host, transmitting a message to each of a plurality of clients including the first client, the message including a header and a payload, the header including either a group identifier or a client identifier, the payload including a group membership file including information indicative of client group memberships in two or more groups and group membership expiration dates if the header is a group identifier, or a client specific payload associated with the client identifier if the header is a client identifier;

updating the data indicative of membership at the first client if the message contains the group identifier and the group membership file includes data characterizing client memberships associated with the first client, and the message is received prior to a corresponding group membership expiration date; and

processing the message at the first client if the message contains a client identifier associated with the first client.

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2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the data indicative of membership comprises a first group identifier.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, further comprising:

creating a first group including two or more member clients, a member client having a client identifier;

assigning the first group identifier to the first group; and

associating the client identifiers of the member clients with the first group identifier in the group membership file.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein each member client satisfies a criterion.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the criterion comprises client profile information.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, further comprising:

transmitting a message including a payload and a second group identifier;

receiving the message at the first client; and

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extracting the payload from the message in response to the first group identifier matching the second group identifier.

7. (Currently Amended) An article comprising÷ a machine-readable medium which stores machine-executable instructions, the instructions causing a machine to:

store data indicative of membership at a first client;

transmit a message to each of a plurality of clients including the first client, the message including a header and a payload, the header including either a group identifier or a client identifier, the payload including a group membership file, the group membership file including information indicative of client memberships in two or more groups and group membership expiration dates if the header is a group identifier, or a client specific payload associated with the client identifier if the header is a client identifier;

update the data indicative of membership at the first client if the message contains the group identifier, and the group membership file includes client memberships associated with the first client, and the message is received prior to a corresponding group membership expiration date; and

process the message at the first client if the message contains a client identifier and the client identifier is associated with the first client.

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8. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 7, wherein the data indicative of membership comprises a first group identifier.

9. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 8, further comprising instructions causing the machine to:

create a first group including two or more member clients, a member client having a client identifier;

assign the first group identifier to the first group; and

associate the client identifiers of the member clients with the first group identifier in the group membership file.

10. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 9, wherein each member client satisfies a criterion.

11. (Original) The article of claim 10, wherein the criterion comprises client profile information.

12. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 8, further comprising instructions causing the machine to:

transmit a message including a payload and a second group identifier;

receive the message at the first client; and

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extract the payload from the message in response to the first group identifier matching the second group identifier.

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a memory operative to store an apparatus identifier;

a receiver operative to receive a message including a header and a payload, the header including either a group identifier or a client identifier, the payload including a group membership file, the group membership file including data characterizing one ~~and two~~ or more associated member identifiers and group membership expiration dates if the header is a group identifier or a client specific payload associated with the client identifier if the header is a client identifier;

a receiver controller operative to store the group identifier in the memory in response to message including a group identifier and the apparatus identifier matches one of the member identifiers and the message is received prior to the membership expiration date; and

a processor to process the client specific payload if the message includes a client identifier and the apparatus identifier matches the client identifier.

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14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the group membership file comprises two or more group identifiers, a group identifier associated with two or more member identifiers.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the receiver controller is operative to identify each group identifier associated with a member identifier that matches the apparatus identifier, and to update the memory to include such identified group identifiers.

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the updating comprises removing a stored group identifier in response to the group identifier not being associated with the apparatus identifier in the group membership file.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the receiver controller is operative to discard the message in response to either of the group identifier or the client identifier not matching the apparatus identifier.

18. (Currently Amended) A system host comprising:
a memory for storing a group membership file and at least one client specific payload, the group membership file including

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data characterizing two or more group identifiers and group
membership expiration dates, a group identifier associated with
two or more member identifiers, the at least one client specific
payload being directed to a predetermined client;

a group generator operative to create a first group
including two or more first group member identifiers that share
a first criterion and associate a group identifier with the two
or more first group membership identifiers in the group
membership file; and

a transmitter operative to transmit a message containing at
least one of the group membership file and the at least one
client specific payload to each of a plurality of client
devices, two or more of the client devices having client
identifiers that match the first group member identifiers, and
one of the plurality of client devices being the predetermined
client, the message including a header having either a group
identifier associated with the group membership file or a client
identifier associated with the predetermined client.

19. (Previously Presented) The system host of claim 18,
further comprising:

a transmission controller operative to transmit the group
membership file to the plurality of client devices at scheduled
intervals.

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20. (Previously Presented) The system host of claim 19, wherein the group generator is operative to update the group membership file and transmit the updated group membership file to each of the plurality of client devices.

21. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

a system host comprising:

a memory for storing a group membership file and at least one client specific payload, the group membership file including data characterizing two or more group identifiers and group membership expiration dates, each group identifier associated with two or more member identifiers, the client specific payload being directed to a predetermined client;

a group generator operative to create a first group including two or more first group membership identifiers that share a first criterion and associate a first group identifier with the two or more first group membership identifiers in the group membership file; and

a transmitter operative to transmit a message containing either a group identifier and an associated group membership file, or a client identifier and an associated at least one client specific payload; and

a plurality of clients, each client comprising:

a memory operative to store an apparatus identifier;

a receiver operative to receive the message in a first transmission and determine whether the message contains a group membership file or a client specific payload; and

a receiver controller operative to store a group identifier in the memory in response to the apparatus identifier matching one of said member identifiers and the message being received prior to a corresponding group membership expiration date; and

a processor to process a client specific payload if the message contains a client specific payload and the client is the predetermined client.

22. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the communication link comprises a transmission line.

23. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the communication link comprises a wireless communication link.

24. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the client devices comprise set-top appliances adapted for connection to a television.

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25. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the client devices comprise hand-held wireless communication devices.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the group membership file includes a plurality of group membership identifiers associated with a plurality of client identifiers corresponding to a plurality of clients.

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